

How to Win at Love and War

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How to Win at Love and War

by [RoonilWazlibMalfoy](#)

Summary

There was no harm in having fun with some Death Eaters, as far as James was concerned. At least, there was no harm until he hooked up with the Dark Lord himself. That was when the real problems began.

Notes

Thanks so much to the Marauders Fest Mod for being so patient with me and to my amazing betas! I had a lot of fun with this fest and I hope that I handled the prompt well.

Based on prompt B51.

Chapter 1



As quietly as possible, James cracked open his bedroom door and peeked out into the flat he shared with Peter. The dim light of early morning streamed through the windows, but the room seemed to be unoccupied aside from the haphazard mess that seemed to accumulate in any home occupied by multiple bachelors.

"Looks like the coast is clear," he whispered. Long pale fingers wrapped around his hip and he turned, a cocky crooked grin on his face, and sarcastically murmured, "My Lord."

Crimson snake-like eyes gazed at him from an incredibly handsome face, the corners crinkled in vague amusement. Soft waves of dark hair fell over his forehead. Impulsively, James pressed a quick kiss to full pink lips, loving the contrast of the man who was known as the darkest wizard of their age having such a soft mouth. "You could still join me," Lord Voldemort said, his grip tightening on James' waist.

It was likely, James thought, that the Dark Lord was not often refused. He was charming, persuasive, and beautiful; it was no wonder so many were willing to do his bidding. But he hadn't been sorted into Gryffindor for nothing. "I've already told you," he said somewhat apologetically, "I think we'd be better off working things out diplomatically rather than fighting."

Annoyance darkened his reddish eyes. "But you'd join Dumbledore," he hissed, spitting the old man's name out as though it was a bogey flavoured Bertie Bott's bean. James wondered idly if Voldemort had ever tried Bertie Bott's beans.

He ran his brown fingers over the Dark Lord's pale cheek, feeling as though he'd been misled. "He made it seem like good versus evil," he said simply. "I've always thought that dark magic was wrong, so I joined him just out of Hogwarts. I didn't know it would be like this."

"You are an idiot," Voldemort proclaimed, not entirely without affection. "Any spell can be dark or light. It's about intent."

Rolling his eyes, James asked, "Really? The killing curse?"

"Could be used to put a dying dog out of its misery as easily as to murder a mudblood," he replied, a wicked smirk on his face. "Everything has a purpose."

"And you only use magic for the noblest of purposes, I suppose," he said, leading Voldemort through the quiet flat.

"I never said that," he said, pausing to look at a Daily Prophet headline proclaiming that his

followers had tormented a muggle village the night before. "I simply don't see any purpose in such arbitrary distinctions. Magic is magic. Power is power. If I can't make my points heard through more traditional means, why should I not use magic?"

It wasn't a bad point, honestly. "Have you tried to make yourself heard through traditional means?" he asked skeptically, his eyebrows raised.

"Of course I have," the Dark Lord said reasonably, laying the newspaper back down on the end table and stalking toward James. His robes fit beautifully, showing off the long lean body that had been pressed tightly against James mere hours before. "Dumbledore pretends to be reasonable, but he had no intention of hearing me out. The meeting we had was no more than a way for him to claim the moral high ground."

That rang uncomfortably true to James. He could easily imagine Dumbledore seeking the upper hand while feigning benevolence, then using that upper hand to garner prestige, to persuade young witches and wizards to his side. "Maybe we should try working together then," he suggested. "If we can get your truths out to the public in less violent ways, they would be free to form their own opinions. Less of a battle, more of a revolution."

"Why do you think I asked you to join me?" Voldemort hissed again, hooking his fingers around the waistband of James' boxers.

It may have been a good idea to have put on more than just pants before walking the Dark Lord out of his flat, James thought, but it was too late for that now. He pressed his body against Voldemort's, nuzzled against his long white throat. "I'll join you in bed whenever you like," he said. It was true. His sex life had never been so good as since he'd started sleeping with Death Eaters. "But if I become a Death Eater, I'd be contributing to the current problem. We need a different solution." He was as convinced as anyone could be that he was right, that there was a third option that simply hadn't presented itself yet.

A strong magical hand crept inside his boxers, cupping his balls and squeezing firmly, a warning. He squeaked and stood up straight. The Dark Lord smirked again.

"Then I will send one of my Death Eaters to you and together you will work out a plan. Surely between one of my loyal followers and a noble Order member like yourself," he sniffed derisively, "you should be able to find a solution that everyone is happy with."

"Yes," James said, his voice higher pitched than usual. "I'm... I'd be happy to try."

"Good," he replied, rewarding James with a friendly smile as if his hand wasn't currently threatening a very tender part of his anatomy. "I have no doubt that you will succeed." With a single firm squeeze, he made it clear that success was not merely a suggestion before withdrawing his hand and pulling James close again and staring deep into his eyes. James could feel him sifting through his thoughts, but there was nothing he could do to resist it.

Finally he smiled wickedly. "Yes," he hissed. "I know just who to send to you. Expect him here later today. Goodbye, Prongs." His smile widened, but it wasn't a happy smile. "I'll let him know that you're a good fuck. That seems to be your thing." With that, he Disapparated, leaving James wondering why he hadn't just done that from the bedroom.

Goose pimples rose over his chest as the magnitude of what he'd just agreed to hit him. How was he supposed to work with a Death Eater to stop the war and establish Voldemort's followers as a legitimate political party rather than an organized terrorist group? He couldn't even keep his own flat clean!

Wrapping his arms around himself, he turned to go back to his room. If he was going to figure this out, he'd do better with trousers on. As he walked across the room, a flash of silver caught the corner of his eye. He jerked his head around and found Peter standing there, holding his Invisibility Cloak nervously in one hand. "You left this in the bathroom," he said. "Why did you need to be invisible in the bathroom, Prongs?" James did not appreciate his accusatory tone, despite the fact that he had been doing quite a bit wrong.

"Erm, how much did you see?" James grimaced.

"Was that Lord Voldemort?!" he demanded, both ignoring and answering James' question in one go. "This is the third villain you've seduced in a month! And you picked the worst one!"

James gave him his patented crooked grin. "In my defense, they were all very cute?" he said sheepishly. He thought it best not to mention that Voldemort was technically the fourth if you counted that time the Malfoys had double-teamed him. Their creepy little house elf had even watched the whole thing.

"No!" Peter exclaimed, sounding utterly exasperated. "No, that's not what we're supposed to be doing, James! We're supposed to be gaining intel." James moved to speak but Peter cut him off. "And finding out who looks best in their skivvies doesn't count!"

"Well, I guess I'll be getting better information now," James said, pouting defensively. "Voldemort is sending someone to work with me so we can stop the war."

Peter seemed to shrink a few inches as he sighed, closing his watery blue eyes and drooping his head. "You're on a first name basis with the Dark Lord," he muttered.

"Is that all you got from that?" James said, moving toward his bedroom again. "You'll see, my sweet little rat. It'll all work out as soon as our new Death Eater friend arrives." Privately he thought that it would have to work out because he rather valued his bollocks, but there was no need to mention that to Peter. It would all be fine. There was nothing at all to worry about.

Chapter 2

There was something to worry about.

Severus Snape sat on his sofa, perched on the edge as if it was distasteful to be here. What a dick! If anything was distasteful it was the fact that Severus Snape was here at all, the big-nosed git.

"Tell me why I am really here, Potter?" he said impatiently. His low voice was not at all sexy, James told himself.

"Voldemort wants us to end the war," he said for the third time. "He wants to be heard so that change can start happening instead of fighting. He thinks he's ruining his brand with all the death and destruction," he added on a whim.

"The Dark Lord," Snape said pointedly, "does not suffer imbeciles. Forgive me if I find it hard to believe he'd think *you* could do something that has not already been done."

How rude! "He asked me to join him," he snapped. "I told him I thought I could do better work without the mark and he... well, he agreed to it anyway." His mind flickered back to the way Voldemort's cool fingers had felt squeezing his balls in warning and he cringed inwardly. Snape didn't need to know that he'd only agreed due to intimidation. "I'm going to be, like, an ambassador."

Snape rolled his dark eyes. "So you plan to support the Dark Lord's resolutions and promote his interests?" he asked dryly. "How do you plan to do this and what does any of it have to do with me?"

James faltered. "I, erm... well, what are his resolutions?" he asked. "And also his interests? What are they?"

Snape seemed to forget that he was disgusted to be in James' flat then. He fell back against the sofa and laughed, a deep throaty sound that James found rather nice. He had never heard Snape laugh before. "Potter," he gasped finally, "What was your plan? You don't even know what you are supposed to be doing and decided to... what? Fumble your way into success?" He pinched the bridge of his nose. "Only a Gryffindor," he muttered, still chuckling in an exasperated sort of way.

"Well, isn't that why you're here?" James demanded. He legitimately didn't understand what Snape's problem was. They were supposed to be making a plan and James was perfectly willing to do that. He just needed Snape to tell him what the plan was so he could do the things.

"Sit down, Potter!" he commanded. "Let me tell you some things about the Dark Lord."

James sat, folding his hands obediently in his lap while Snape rolled his eyes again. It was a wonder he didn't get headaches with all the eye rolling he did, James thought. Maybe he'd made a potion to ward off eye-rolling induced headaches. He always had been good at brewing.

"What the Dark Lord most desires is power," Snape said, shooting a glare at James. "Blood purity is of little concern to him, as evidenced by my presence among his numbers. But he does love the power that is afforded to the older families so he manipulates them."

That made no sense. Why would he go around killing and torturing muggles if all he wanted was power? And what did he even want power for? What was the end goal? He hadn't been aware of the fact that he was voicing those thoughts until Snape told him to shut up.

“He does not concern himself with blood purity, but he does hate muggles. I do not know how much time you have spent around them, but they are nasty creatures indeed, especially to those of us who are different from them. The Dark Lord wishes to protect magical children from them. That is the sanest of his goals and it is the primary reason that I joined him,” Snape said.

“Muggles hurt him?” James asked, shaken. It seemed strange to think of Voldemort ever having been a child, for one thing. It also seemed unbelievable that someone with no magic whatsoever could ever really harm a wizard.

“I would imagine so.” Snape’s tone was flat, as if he were masking some deeper emotion.

“Muggles hurt *you* ?” he asked.

Dark eyes closed and Snape’s mouth tightened. “Yes,” he said simply.

“Merlin,” James breathed. “I didn’t know they could do that.” He looked away from Snape’s pained face. “Why is it controversial to want to protect children?”

Snape sighed. “As I have said, that is the sanest of his goals. He is very strong, magically speaking. He is very clever and cunning and he has a silver tongue. But he is not sane. The rest of his goals hardly bear mentioning, and that one is not likely to be taken seriously when it’s being touted by someone who is obsessive and violent. On top of all of that, I suspect that he has a somewhat unnatural relationship with that snake of his.”

“Oi,” James groaned, sinking down in his chair. The fate of his bollocks was looking bleaker and bleaker with every word Snape spoke. Then a thought occurred to him. “You said protecting children from muggles was a primary reason for joining him. What were your other reasons?”

Those dark eyes narrowed in anger. “You really are an idiot, James Potter,” Snape spat. “I joined him because I needed protection from your gang of idiots. You run around with a werewolf and everyone thinks the world of you, as if you weren’t just as dangerous and cocky as the Dark Lord. At least I could trust him not to hurt me when I did nothing wrong. The same could not be said for you or your friends or your wonderful kind Dumbledore.”

James had never really stopped to consider the fact that his actions did have consequences for people other than himself. Realization dawned in his mind and it was not pleasant. He thought back on all the things that he had done to Snape over the years and he could see that, especially if he was having trouble with muggles when he was at home, The Marauders really had driven him to Voldemort. Where else could he go when he wasn’t safe at home and he wasn’t safe in the Wizarding World. Dumbledore had always favoured the Marauders and James had always assumed that there was good reason for that. But what if there was no reason for it? What if it was just a flaw in Dumbledore’s character that had allowed James and several generations of Gryffindors throughout the years to think of themselves as better than everyone else?

“I’m sorry, Snape,” he said, feeling rather gutted. “I really am an idiot.” His worry over his balls seemed rather flimsy beside the thought that he had literally driven someone to become a villain in his own story. Typically, when he felt the need to apologize to someone, he’d offer to go down on them. That seemed to put most anyone in a better frame of mind. But he didn’t think that Snape would appreciate it, so he just sat there feeling miserable while Snape stared him down. Snape’s pale face looked more gratified the longer he looked, as if he was taking extreme pleasure in James’ feelings of remorse and self-deprecation.

“Right,” he finally said, not really forgiving James but seeming unwilling to continue dwelling on it. “The issue at hand is that we must find a way to keep the Dark Lord happy at this point. I am

not inclined to give a damn about whatever he has threatened you with, but he can make my life even more miserable than it already is and I have no intention of allowing that to happen. How do you plan to be an ambassador now that you know more about what you've signed up for?" He smirked as if he knew full well that James had no idea what he was doing.

"I, erm. I reckon we can start with the children thing," he said. A desire to protect children from evil muggles seemed like a safe enough bet. He couldn't imagine much of the wizarding population going against that. "So, you can go back home and come up with some ideas and then we'll meet back up tomorrow to go over the plan?" Getting Snape out of his home seemed like a matter of urgency. He was feeling sick over the fact that he'd caused the man so much turmoil and trouble throughout the years and he was feeling sick over the fact that he had no idea how they were going to pull this off. Glancing around the room, he saw Peter in rat form, sleeping under the dining table and knew that he was only waiting until Snape left to accost him again.

"I'm afraid not, Potter," Snape replied, his face a picture of displeasure. "I am not to leave you alone until the Dark Lord says I can. I would imagine that will require some kind of progress beyond, 'I reckon we can start with the children thing,'" he mocked James in a stupid-sounding tone.

Oh. Oh. "Did he tell you anything about me?" James asked, recalling the way Voldemort had said "I'll let him know you're a good fuck" on his way out the door. His face felt hot as Snape looked him over, an eyebrow raised.

"Yes," he said finally, "and I'm not interested."

Okay, seriously, James thought. Does he have to be so surly? It's not as though he really wanted Snape to be interested, but would it hurt him to at least pretend to consider it? Peter's shiny black eyes were open and trained directly on him. Could rats look amused?

"Well, yeah," James said after a beat. "Of course not." He laughed, aiming to sound casual. He was pretty sure he failed. "I wouldn't be either. Heh... I just wondered if he said anything to you." James ran a hand through already messy hair. Snape blinked and said nothing. "So you're going to be here until we figure this all out," he said, awkwardly changing the subject.

"Or until the Dark Lord decides to kill you," Snape said, the corners of his mouth turned up. Was that his idea of humor? Merlin.

"You're not funny, you know."

"I am hilarious, Potter," he replied. "But not nearly as funny as you thinking you could get away with fucking the Dark Lord without consequences."

"I didn't fuck *him* !" James retorted before he could even think better of it. "I mean..."

Snape's dark eyes glittered with amusement. "I know quite well what you meant. That doesn't change my level of interest, I'm afraid."

Sighing, James looked at him for a moment then stood up. "I'm going to go take a nap," he said, shooting a pointed look at Peter, intending for him to follow so that they could regroup. He did not know how to deal with Severus Snape sitting here in their flat, much less with the prospect of working to win a war for an apparently insane person, if Snape was to be believed. He was beginning to think that Remus and Sirius had an easier job trying to infiltrate a werewolf colony than he had here gathering information with Peter. Not that he'd really gathered much information, of course. He could tell Dumbledore that Amycus Carrow had a really small cock and that Barty Jr.

had a thing for tying people up, but he didn't think that Dumbledore would want to know, and if he did, James didn't want to think about that. He made sure that Peter caught his intention and then began to make his way to his bedroom.

"Pettigrew is a rat and he's following you," Snape called after him, "in case you didn't already know." His tone sounded perfectly innocent – too innocent, in fact – so James knew that he was taking the piss. Fucking Snape.

Chapter 3

A week later, James was losing his ever-loving mind. Snape was still there, being polite and intelligent and annoying as hell. James was positive that he was being laughed at most of the time, but he couldn't figure out exactly how Snape was making fun of him so he couldn't call him out on it. Furthermore, he hadn't been out anywhere in a week. He hadn't gotten laid in a week. And Peter was still angry with him for getting them into this mess in the first place. They were no closer to finding a solution than they'd ever been.

Somehow, over the course of the week, Snape had taken over James' bedroom and had relegated him to sleeping on the sofa, so on top of everything else, his back hurt. Sleeping on the sofa did, however, afford him one benefit, and that was being awake before everyone else in the small flat. It gave him a chance to wake up without Peter's annoyed face looking at him and without Snape's dark knowing gaze looking past him as if he didn't exist, and more importantly, it gave him a chance to wank.

Did he feel guilty wanking in their living room? No, he did not. He didn't even want to be wanking in the living room. He wanted to be wanking in his bed. It was Snape's fault that he was wanking in the living room where anyone could walk in on him at any moment and, if he was being honest with himself, that was part of the appeal. He didn't think he could sink any lower in Peter's eyes at this point, but he wouldn't mind trying, if only for the fact that it would mean something different was happening. And as for Snape...

Well. He wouldn't mind getting caught by Snape either.

When they were at school together, Snape had seemed to be this nasty boy, all greasy and full of Dark Magic, more beak than anything else. But in the days since he'd been sent to stay with him, he'd found that there was actually a lot more to him than just his nose. His face had hardened since school, so he was all sharp jawline and angular cheekbones; his nose didn't seem so prominent amidst the other hard lines of his face. He wasn't what James would call attractive, not like Voldemort was, but he was certainly striking. And hell, Voldemort was apparently clinically insane, so there was a chance that James' first impressions weren't exactly top-notch anyhow.

Even more than just his appearance, though, James was intrigued by Snape himself. He was an enigma and a contradiction wrapped in a mystery and James wanted nothing more than to unwrap every layer and taste what lay beneath. He was polite and cordial as if he'd been coached in upper crust pureblood manners far more strictly than James had ever been, despite having been raised amidst muggles. He supposed he could thank the Malfoys for that. He'd been correct when he'd stated that he was hilarious, but his was a harsh biting wit and he didn't seem to care who got cut by his sharp tongue. He was precise and observant, as cunning as any snake could hope to be. He was calm and self-assured, but when his wicked temper flared, it was borderline frightening.

Not that James would ever admit to being frightened by old Snivellus. Not that he would ever really use that taunting schoolyard nickname again, either, though. He was incredibly and irrevocably infatuated with the man.

He pushed his pants down just enough to pull his cock and balls out, just enough to feel the cool air of the room on his body. His fingers drifted to his mouth and he sucked on them, imagining long pale ones in their place. Voldemort, Bellatrix, Lucius, Barty... the faces and bodies of people he'd been with flickered through his mind. People that had made him feel alive and free in the midst of this stupid war. His life wasn't meant to be like this. And always, his thoughts returned to Snape.

Running his palms down his chest, he paused at his nipples, pinching them hard. A bit of pain with his pleasure was what he needed, was why he'd sought out villains, as Peter had put it. Snogging sessions with Lily back at Hogwarts had been nice and Lily was a wonderful girl, but about nothing about her had set him on fire like this, like sleeping with the enemy had done. He scraped his own blunt nails down his ribs, imagining Snape's black-painted ones instead. Cupping his balls, he squeezed – not tight like Voldemort had done, but just enough for him to feel the pressure – and choked back a groan. He ran his still damp fingers back behind his balls and put a bit of pressure on his arsehole, not entering it – even he wasn't masochistic enough to fuck himself without lube – just enjoying the touch of his own fingers on his body.

He had just taken his cock in a firm hand and begun to stroke it when he heard the low sound of an annoyed Severus Snape.

"Put it away, Potter," he grunted. "I am not in the mood."

James pulled his finger away from his arse, but didn't stop stroking his cock. "That's the problem, Snape," he said, meeting those dark eyes. "You never seem to be in the mood."

"Perhaps," Snape said, smirking as he buttoned the top of his high-collared robes. "Or maybe you're just bad at seduction." He raked his eyes over James' body, then sat down in the chair across from him, his gaze never wavering, his sharp eyes daring James to keep going.

Never one to back down from a challenge, James continued to wank, his hand moving quickly over his cock, all thoughts of a slow, leisurely orgasm abandoned. He stared into face, imagining Snape's hand on his body instead of his own, imagining Snape pressed against him, inside him. Mere moments into it, he found himself coming, embarrassingly quickly, all over his fingers and stomach.

"Impressive," Snape said dryly. "I can certainly see why so many of my associates seek you out, with stamina such as that."

He stood then and stalked to the kitchen without another word. His black robes fluttered around his ankles as he walked and James noticed that his feet were bare. He wished that he could kiss them. Subservience had never really been his thing, but he had enough confidence and experience to know that it could be intensely pleasurable, and enough self-awareness to recognize that it may be what was required of him if he ever wanted to seduce someone that he had wronged so thoroughly, someone like Severus Snape.

It wasn't fair, though, Snape judging him for that pitiful performance. He'd caught him off guard, that was all. Still... first impressions were important, he thought, and he had a lifetime of poor first impressions to make up for with Snape. May as well add one more to the list. Grabbing his wand from the coffee table, he cast a few cleaning charms over his stomach and hands, then tucked his cock back inside his boxers and followed Snape to the kitchen.

He found the man sitting at the kitchen table reading the Prophet while he waited for the kettle to boil. His dark hair fell around his face like a curtain as he studied the front page.

"You know you could boil the water with magic, right," James asked, taking a seat across the table from him.

"Yes, Potter," Snape replied, not even looking up from the paper. "I am a wizard. I think we established that over the course of seven years of magical schooling. I prefer to wait for it." He flipped a page then said, "You really need to do something about this." He sat up and looked pointedly at James.

The article he'd been reading told of another Death Eater raid in a mostly – but not entirely – muggle neighborhood the night before. Six people had died and two witches were still missing. The moving image of the burning village left James feeling a bit queasy.

"I'm not sure what you expect me to do about it," he protested. "I'm not going out burning up towns. That's more of a '*your people*' thing."

Snape sniffed derisively. "I expect you to do whatever you promised the Dark Lord that you'd do. He is baiting you with this, you know. That is the area Lily grew up in." He poked at the photograph with one long finger. The flames seemed to rise up to meet his black fingernail.

"Is Lily...?" James felt the blood drain from his face. He did not want to finish that question. He and Lily had called it quits just after they'd finished school, but he had no desire to see her come to harm. She was so bright and spunky and absolutely gorgeous. The world would be a darker place without Lily Evans in it.

"Lily is fine, you imbecile," he snapped. "Don't you think I'd have led with that if my childhood best friend had been murdered due to your inaction? She doesn't live there any longer."

"Oh." James let out a breath and relaxed a bit, but he couldn't forget the fact that, even if he hadn't known them, people had still been killed. He couldn't just wave that off the way that he did most things that had nothing to do with him. "Well, you're supposed to be helping me," he finally said weakly.

Snape glared at him darkly and James felt the sudden urge to run away. "I will do what I have been ordered to do, James Potter," he said in a quiet tone that was somehow far more frightening than a raised voice would have been. James was certain that this Severus Snape could take down Voldemort and Dumbledore both if he had a mind to. "But this was your idea and I cannot make something from nothing. Progress begins with you, I'm afraid." He looked as if he didn't find that to be a particularly promising thought and James silently and begrudgingly agreed.

Just then, Peter walked into the room, rubbing his eyes blearily. "Have you even considered talking to Dumbledore?" he asked as he cut himself a slice of cake. The breakfast of champions, James thought affectionately. "I mean, you talked to You-Know-Who. It would make sense to get a feel for both sides before making a plan."

"I could kiss you, Pete!" James exclaimed and Peter gave him a slightly horrified look. "Why didn't you think of that?" he demanded of Snape.

"Who said that I didn't?" he replied vaguely, standing as the kettle began whistling. "You didn't ask. And I've told you repeatedly that you are the one who needs to make the plan. Clearly the Dark Lord would have been wiser to put his faith and his cock in your mousey little friend, here. He seems to be the brains of your operation, for what little that is worth."

"Okay," James said, ignoring Snape. Who needed that kind of negativity when they had a plan? "We're going out tonight!"

"Not it!" Peter said, taking his cake and scurrying out of the room.

"Oi," James continued cheerfully. "Guess it's just you and me, Sevvy." Then, "Ow!" as the stinging hex Snape sent at him hit.

"Do not call me that," he snapped. "I would prefer that you not call me at all, but absolutely do not call me that."

"Okay, okay," James said defensively. "Can I at least call you Severus? You've seen my cock."

"If you must," Snape sighed. "Although it seems to me that a great many people have seen your cock, so I'm not sure why that would afford any special privileges."

"Brill!" James said. Ignoring Snape's snark was getting easier and easier to do. It seemed that, just as Peter loved cake and Sirius loved his hair, Severus loved to be mean. James found that he rather liked it. "You should call me James too!"

"Why on earth would I want to do that?" His dark eyes held some unreadable emotion and James wondered, not for the first time, what Snape was thinking.

"Because we're going out tonight and if we don't want to stand out, we have to look like we're friends at least," he explained. "Dumbledore always goes to the Hogs Head on Friday nights. So we'll run into him accidentally on purpose and if he sees us being friendly, maybe he'll realize that our sides can work together and be more willing to hear us out."

Finally putting the paper down entirely, Snape gave his full attention to James then. He stared at him so intensely and for so long that James began to feel uncomfortable. He didn't think he'd ever felt anyone gaze at him so intensely. Was Snape using Legilimency on him or was he just pondering the idea? Shifting, he looked directly into Snape's eyes. Whatever it was that he was looking for, James decided to let him find it.

"That," he said slowly, "is not a terrible plan, Potter." The surprise that was evident on his face should probably have been offensive, but James couldn't help feeling a bit of pride and pleasure instead. It was, perhaps, the first time that Snape – Severus, he mentally corrected himself – had ever had any kind of non-negative opinion of him or of anything that he'd said.

James beamed brightly back at him and Snape, taking a sip of tea, returned to his newspaper. James shifted again. He was so incredibly bored and had no interest in waiting until evening to be entertained. "So what do you want to do today?" he attempted.

"What I would like to do is get back to my life, Potter," Snape said, again not looking up from the paper. "But I suppose that, as that is not an option, I am to be burdened by your need for constant attention yet again."

"What do you normally do?" James asked. He'd never really considered the fact that Snape even had a life before. He wondered if he had a job, a partner, a pet, *a child*? "What life are you wanting to get back to?"

Surprisingly, Snape put the paper down and answered his question. He hadn't really expected him to open up at all, but he wasn't complaining. Snape explained that he was studying for a Potions Mastery and that he tutored in Defense in his free time. He had no partner, no children, no pets. Only books and magic. "Not all of us can be independently wealthy, Potter. Some of us must work to make do," he finished pointedly. "And what is it that you do?"

"Erm, well," James thought for a moment. What *did* he do? "I can turn into a deer," he said finally, certain that it wasn't a satisfactory answer, but it was the only one he could think of.

Snape snorted. "A very illustrious career, I'm sure," he said before returning to his paper.

James sighed. He wished that Sirius were there. There was never any boredom when the two of them were together. If nothing else, Sirius would have let him suck him off to kill some time. Or maybe not, now that he and Moony were officially together. He sighed again. He was pretty certain

Snape wouldn't be interested in that sort of arrangement.

"Stop thinking so hard," Snape muttered from across the table. He had produced a quill from somewhere and was neatly filling in the crossword puzzle. "You'll damage yourself."

"Can I suck your cock?" James asked, seemingly out of the blue. There was no harm in asking, he'd decided. It's not like Snape's opinion of him could get much lower.

Snape lowered his quill and looked at James, one black eyebrow raised, then he stood. James braced himself for the stinging hex that he was sure was coming his way.

"Very well," Snape said.

"Wait. What?" James was certain that the open-mouthed look was not a particularly good one for him, but he couldn't hide his surprise.

"I said very well," Snape said, smirking. "You've just offered to shut up for a while. I'm not sure why you thought I wouldn't take advantage of that. Come along, Potter."

With that, he strode out of the kitchen and headed for the bedroom, clearly expecting James to follow. After taking a moment to close his mouth and compose himself, he did just that.

Chapter 4

Peter was nowhere to be found in the quiet flat, so James assumed that he was hiding out in his room with some cake. He wasn't particularly bothered about Peter though. Shuffling quickly through the room, he stood at the door of his bedroom and took a deep breath. He knew that Snape had only accepted his offer for selfish reasons. Or maybe he was just as bored and tired of waiting around as James was. But it still felt monumental, what he was about to do. He and Snape had gone from true enemies back at Hogwarts to... well, not really friends. Not really lovers either. They'd gone from enemies to not quite enemies and James was still hoping for more. Maybe what he was about to do would help it turn into more.

"Were you planning on standing there all day?" Snape's face appeared behind a crack in the door as he opened it sharply. "My cock may be large, but not large enough to reach all the way out there." He looked incredibly amused and indescribably enticing.

"Erm. I was just..."

"Yes, you were just standing there gaping Potter. I'm well aware. Are you coming in or not?"

"Well, it's *my* bedroom, you know," James huffed though he really wasn't terribly bothered.

"Then you should have no problem coming inside," Snape said simply then moved back from the door, deeper into the room, leaving the door opened a crack as it had been. James went inside.

He found Snape standing beside his bed, just as buttoned up as ever, that amused smirk still on his face. The bed linens had been changed, or at least transfigured, to a deep navy blue and the duvet cover was a soft dove grey. It didn't even look like his bedroom anymore.

"I thought it was high time you let go of your Gryffindor loyalties," Snape said as he noticed James looking around the room for his formerly scarlet bedding. "You are an adult, Potter. It's time to act like it."

Nodding, James moved toward him without a word and tentatively reached out for the buttons of his high-collared robe before Snape smacked his hands away, though he was far gentler than he could have been.

"I can undress myself, Potter," he said softly. "Take your pants off and get on your knees."

Still, James didn't speak; he simply obeyed. There was something gratifying about following orders in the bedroom and Snape commanded him with a cool and quiet confidence that he had rarely experienced before. Almost reverently, he watched from the floor as Snape unbuttoned his robes slowly, one tiny button at a time, slowly revealing a body that was pale, almost too thin. His chest was covered with a light layer of black hair, his arms were all lean wiry muscle. Despite having wanked not long before, James felt his cock beginning to plump as more of Snape's body became visible to him.

When he reached the buttons at hip level, James became aware that he was wearing his robes in the traditional style: with absolutely nothing underneath. Something bigger than butterflies fluttered in his stomach as he tensed with anticipation. They must have been bats, James thought as he looked at the pale thin man, now fully naked, standing before him. He wanted to kiss and lick every inch of him, his dark little nipples, the line of dark hair that ran down his belly, his long sinewy legs. He had not been lying about having a big cock and James couldn't wait to feel the weight of it on his

tongue. "Can I?" he murmured, speaking for the first time since entering the room.

"That is why we're here," Snape replied. "You wanted my cock in your slutty little mouth. So do it, little lion. Show off that courage you supposedly possess."

Just the sight of Snape's angular body had made James' cock begin to grow hard, but the challenge he'd just issued got him the rest of the way there. He had been ordered about in the bedroom before. He had been tied up and spanked. He had been fucked hard and he'd loved every moment of it. But never before had he been teased, challenged. Never before had anyone appealed to him as a Gryffindor and it did things to him that he would not have expected. He dove forward and, wrapping his forearms around Snape's thighs, he swallowed his cock. It was big - perhaps bigger than any he'd ever had - but he managed it in one go. Snape's hands moved to his head, twining his wild dark hair around those long perfect fingers. He moaned and pulled James' head back, then thrust into his throat again, fucking his mouth hard.

Groaning, James went with it, savouring the taste of his precome on his tongue, the feel of that long cock in his throat, the stretch of his lips around it. His mind began to drift and he became just a hole for Snape to fuck. He loved it. He imagined the two of them continuing this into the future, he imagined a hundred different positions, a hundred different scenarios that all ended in him being a hole for Snape to fuck. He wanted the challenge of it, the submission of it. He wanted and he wanted.

Before too long, Snape slowed and pulled James away from his lovely cock. "Kiss it," he commanded, loosening his fingers from James' hair. This time he moved slowly, meeting Snape's eyes the entire time. He pressed his puckered lips to the wet head of Snape's cock then pulled back. That was all he'd been given permission to do. "I wasn't ready to come yet," Snape said simply, then he laid down on the bed, shifting himself up until his head lay on the pillow. He spread his legs, then beckoned James to join him on the bed.

"You're very good, Potter," he said in a soothing tone as James crawled up on the bed. "Continue."

James continued, this time at his own pace. He ran his tongue over Snape's full balls, then licked up his cock dipping his tongue gently into the slit and tasting the salty precome gathered there. Snape lay there, hands by his sides and watched James, letting him play as he wished. It didn't take long before he got more adventurous, lapping at the space just behind his balls, and Snape lifted his legs to allow him easier access. Laying down on his stomach, he wrapped a hand around Snape's cock and stroked it slowly as he licked and nibbled his perineum and moved down to his tight puckered arsehole.

He flicked his tongue over the little opening, then ran it in soft circles around the rim. Snape gasped and pushed against James' face, driving the tip of his tongue inside and James eagerly let him. He humped the grey duvet as he fucked his tongue into Snape's arse, tasting him, loving the way that tight ring of muscle squeezed around his tongue.

Suddenly, Snape shifted and, in a fluid graceful movement, flipped James onto his back and straddled his face. He pumped his own cock twice, three times, and then came all over James' face and opened mouth. His glasses and hair were streaked with it, the salty tang of it lay on his tongue. His own cock throbbed with need, but he didn't think he'd ever been more pleased with himself. He moved out from under Snape and lay his own head on a pillow while Snape flopped down next to him. Had anyone told him, even a few weeks before, that he'd be happily naked in bed with Severus Snape, he probably would have laughed in their face, but just at that moment, he found that there was nowhere he'd rather be.

After a few moments of recovery time, Snape rolled over to face him and brushed a pale hand over

his stomach. "You were so good, James," he said, his voice husky and low. It did not escape James that that was the first time he'd ever used his name. "Would you like me to take care of that for you?" He gestured at James' hard cock and James stared back at him in wonder before nodding. He had not expected any kind of reciprocation. He'd only wanted to taste Severus, to make him feel nice, to distract them both from the waiting game they'd found themselves in.

When he nodded, that lovely hand wrapped around his cock and Snape moved closer to him, his chin against his shoulder, his lips against his ear. He stroked slowly, firmly, and began whispering filthy words in James' ear. "I bet you'd like it if I fucked you, wouldn't you? You're such a good little whore, a perfect hole to fill. I bet your arse is so hungry for come right now, isn't it Potter? You'd love to feel me stretching you wide and spilling inside you."

James was no stranger to dirty talk. He was no stranger to filthy thoughts. But he didn't think he'd ever had anyone speak so brazenly before. It didn't take long at all for his balls to tighten, for him to come all over his own stomach. He lay, boneless, and gazed over at Snape who still had a self-satisfied smirk on his face. Snape grabbed his wand from the bedside table and cleaned them both up. James wondered where he'd left his own wand and decided that it didn't matter.

He stared at the Dark Mark on Snape's arm. He'd seen it plenty of times, on plenty of lovers in recent times. This was the first time that he really wished that it wasn't there. He wanted to kiss that smirk off Snape's face and he wanted to stay in bed with him all day. He wanted the war to not be a thing. He wanted a pair of crazy old men to not be in control of them. He wanted and he wanted. But if wishes were broomsticks then muggles could ride. Simply wanting wasn't going to be enough this time.

One thing that happened while they were in the bedroom together is that James committed himself to truly ending the war. The threat to his bollocks had scared him, but that hadn't really done it. It was the hope of spending days like this that really drove him. Love, or lust as the case may be, was a powerful force, or whatever it was that Dumbledore always said. Another thing that happened while they were in the bedroom together is that they both felt a level of connection to another person that neither had ever experienced before.

Both gained something to fight for; neither spoke of it. Snape had succeeded in shutting James up for a time and they dozed together there, as if the evening they had planned was of little consequence. As they slept, their limbs tangled together. As they slept, everything fell into place.

Chapter 5

When one is sleeping through the day, evening seems to arrive much more quickly, which is how James and Severus ended up running late for their own schemes. Well, that and the fact that Snape refused to let him dress like any reasonable person would when they were going out on a Friday night.

“No,” Snape had said with no other explanation at all when James came out of the bathroom in a blue top that would be more classified as net than fabric.

“That is the ugliest thing I’ve ever seen,” Snape said when James had gone to change and came out in a magenta suit and an ascot.

“But we’re going to meet Dumbledore,” he protested. “He loves this kind of thing.”

“If looking like Dumbledore is your greatest aspiration, I’m afraid that I can’t be a part of this,” Snape snapped back.

“That will do, I suppose,” Snape had finally agreed when James came out in a David Bowie t-shirt and a pair of jeans, both of which he’d lifted from Sirius but Snape didn’t need to know that. He knew how Snape felt about Padfoot and he really didn’t want to have to change again. It was messing up his hair.

Snape, for his part, looked the same as he always did. Dark robes, high collar, all buttoned up. “You could stand to loosen up a little, you know,” James criticised. “We’re just going to the pub. And not even a nice one.” If Snape wasn’t going to let him wear what he wanted to, he didn’t see why Snape should get to. He’d stand out as badly as Dumbledore if he went to The Hog’s Head in something so formal.

Sighing, Snape looked James over then gazed down at his own robes and stalked into the bedroom. When he returned, he was wearing James’ clothes: a pair of dark blue jeans and a hoodie that proclaimed *Chasing Rainbows* beside a multi-colored Quaffle. It was possibly the most ridiculous sight James had ever seen and he didn’t think he’d ever loved anything more.

“Much better,” he approved, smiling in self-satisfaction at Snape’s disgruntled face. “Let’s go!” he said. Grabbing Snape’s arm, he waited for him to Apparate them out, though he could easily have done so himself. Despite all of Snape’s assertions that James was the one in charge of this project, he still felt like the opposite was true and he was certain that Snape knew it.

They landed on Main Street in Hogsmeade and quickly made their way to The Hog’s Head, pushing past other wizards and witches who were meandering through the town as if they weren’t in a war. For someone of his height, Snape walked fast. James was practically jogging to keep up, but he supposed that was for the best. The sooner they got this phase of the plan out of the way, the sooner they could figure out what the next part would be.

When they entered the bar, Snape suddenly seemed to falter, much less confident than he had been striding down the street in spite of the fact that the pub was grotty and full of less than desirable people. James glanced around then, not seeing Dumbledore anywhere, grabbed him by the arm and gently led him over to the bar where Aberforth was standing, wiping the surface down with a rag that appeared filthier than the bar itself.

“Hey, Abe,” he said casually. “You know if the Headmaster is here yet?”

Aberforth grunted and didn't even look up at them. "He went upstairs with a crazy-looking witch," he said gruffly.

James looked over at Snape in confusion. "Why would Dumbledore be upstairs with a *witch*?" he wondered idly. If they couldn't talk to Dumbledore tonight, he had no idea what they'd do.

"Oh, I don't know Potter," Snape said, a look of obvious disgust on his sharp face. "Why would *you* go upstairs with a witch?"

Waving him off, James said, "I know why I would, but Dumbledore isn't like that. He only goes for wizards."

"I don't even want to know why you know that," he said, suddenly looking very interested in the wooden cups behind the bar. "Are those cedar?" he asked Aberforth.

"Aye," Aberforth said, looking surprised that anyone was interested in anything in the whole grotty pub. "Cheaper than glass and harder to break." He went back to wiping down the bar.

"Hmm," Snape hummed thoughtfully. His face was unreadable but he clearly had something turning over in his mind. "We should go upstairs and try to alert Dumbledore that we are here," he said decisively.

Shrugging, James decided it was best to go along with it. He was just glad to have someone other than him in control of the situation. Slipping around the other patrons, he led Snape confidently up the stairs and, noting that all of the doors there save one were open, stopped before the closed door. "He must be in there with her," he whispered.

Snape didn't even have the chance to reply before a low unnatural-sounding voice rang out from behind the closed door. "The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches..." it moaned and James looked over, wide-eyed, at Snape.

"Was that a prophecy?" he hissed, and Snape gazed back, equally wide-eyed.

Suddenly, the stairs behind them creaked and Aberforth stood behind them. "What are you two doing up here?" he demanded. "I told you Albus was in a meeting."

"Oh!" James giggled, falling against Severus and leaning his head affectionately against his shoulder. "Sorry, we thought we'd find an empty room while we waited for him. Just got a little turned around." He had no desire to let Dumbledore's own brother know they'd been listening in on his meeting and feigning flirtation with Snape was the easiest way he knew to deflect attention. It wasn't that far from the truth, anyway.

Aberforth eyed them both suspiciously but said nothing else. He gruffly indicated that their waiting would be best done downstairs so they went, locating an empty table and settling down.

"You can't tell *him* what we just heard," James said earnestly. There was no doubt that the prophecy, whatever else it had meant, was about Voldemort. Telling him that someone was approaching who could kill him seemed like the worst idea ever. "He'll go crazy!"

"He is already crazy, Potter," Snape intoned. "Did you not hear me when I told you that before? I have to tell him. If I do not, he will find out anyway, and he will be most displeased." He stood and brushed a hand over James' jaw. "Order three beers," he directed. "I will return momentarily." He paused, meeting James' eyes seriously. "Trust me," he said in a gentle tone before turning and walking out the door.

Sinking miserably down in his chair, James flagged Aberforth down and did as Snape had asked, wondering even as he did it why. Why had he gotten himself wrapped up in this? Why had he trusted a Death Eater? Why should he continue to trust one even when all evidence pointed to the fact that he really really shouldn't? Moments later, Aberforth brought the beers back, splashing the table as he set them down. James sipped his own beer from the rough-hewn wooden cup and waited.

While he was beginning to suspect that there was little that he should have trusted Severus on, it seemed that he could, in fact, trust him to come back quickly when he said that he would. He was less than thrilled to see him returning with the Dark Lord on his heels, but he had faced Voldemort before in far less clothing. He could handle this, he told himself.

"Ah, my darling little deer," Voldemort said smoothly, his red eyes filled with sarcasm and cruelty. James wished he'd never learned about his animagus form, about the youthful nickname he'd had with his friends. "Lovely to see you again, even though the setting leaves something to be desired." He looked around in disgust then cast a very obvious cleaning charm at his chair before taking a seat. "So common," he said, picking up the wooden cup in front of him and taking a sip.

"My Lord, we were here to begin implementing the plan that we have worked out," Snape began, not quite meeting Voldemort's eyes. "But we overheard something that I thought you should be made aware of."

Voldemort took another sip of beer, then gestured for Severus to keep talking. "Do spit it out then, Severus," he said, sounding very like a snake when he said Snape's name. James hated it.

"Of course," Snape began, then looked carefully at Voldemort, not saying another word. When he didn't continue, James turned his focus back to the Dark Lord as well. He seemed to be struggling to breathe.

"What isss thiss, Severusss?" he hissed. "Trickery?!"

"No, My Lord," Snape said, looking just as confused as James felt. Was that real or was he acting, James wondered. He had no way of knowing. Snape continued, "Never! What can I do for you?"

Voldemort continued to rasp and struggle to breathe. His body seemed to be shrinking in on itself. His nose retreated, his skin grew scaly until he looked very much like a snake. His chest heaved as he gasped for air until, finally, he slumped back in his chair and breathed no more.

"What. The. Fuck?" James said, in shock. Could it be possible that Voldemort had literally just died there in the grottiest pub in the wizarding world, seemingly of nothing??

"I told you that I thought he was doing unnatural experiments with his snake," Snape replied calmly, running diagnostic charms over Voldemort's inert body, just to be certain.

"I thought you meant he was letting it crawl up his arse or something!" James said loudly, coloring slightly when the other patrons looked at him, amused. "So he was like, merging himself with the snake?" he asked in a quieter tone, as if that was the part of his statement that needed to be quiet.

"Apparently," Snape said. "And snakes are allergic to cedar." The groveling servant act had completely disappeared and the self-satisfied smirk was back on his pale face.

"How do you even know that?" James asked, for some reason unconcerned about the fact that he was asking about the history of Snape's education on serpents next to the dead body of the Dark Lord.

"I was a Slytherin," he replied as if that explained everything.

James rolled his eyes. "What the bloody hell does that even mean? I was a Gryffindor and I know nothing about lions."

"You know nothing about most things, Potter. That isn't saying much," Snape said. "Now we just wait for Dumbledore to come back with the prophetic and let him take care of the rest."

James relaxed then. That was true. The how and the why really didn't matter so much at this point. Other people could take care of things and he could go back to doing what he did best, namely, lounging around and letting other people take care of things. He smiled over at Snape and received what he thought was an actual genuine smile in return. There are some things you can't share without ending up liking each other. It turned out that defeating a Dark Lord with a cedar cup and a grumpy barman was one of those things.

"Ah, my boys!" Dumbledore's voice rang out cheerily to them from the stairs. "It is so nice to see you two getting along at last," he said. "And what's this?"

"Erm, we... well, your brother really... we kind of killed Voldemort," James said, stumbling over his words. He thought he'd gotten the pertinent information out anyway.

Dumbledore looked over at the body of the Dark Lord for a moment, then smiled. "So you have," he said, his blue eyes twinkling merrily. "Hail, hail to these boys!" he shouted out to the bar. "The Dark Lord is dead!"

Snape rolled his eyes at the old man's dramatics, but he still looked rather pleased to be recognized for a job well done for once.

"Well, my boys," he said. "I think I should take the corpse to the Ministry and let them deal with the rest." He cast a levitation charm over Voldemort's body. "I'm certain that someone will be in touch with you both in the coming days. Until then, enjoy yourselves! This is a time to celebrate." And with that he, along with the Dark Lord, Apparated out.

James sipped his beer again and looked across the table to Severus. "I like you," he said.

Severus looked back at him thoughtfully. "I am finding, Potter," he said, "that I do not hate you. I may be persuaded to keep you. Provided that I am the only villain you seduce from here on out."

Grinning, James said, "I think I can handle that. You *are* very cute."

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